

Fear Me Out Podcast

Episode 56

Hosted by Clinical Psychologist - Dana P. Saperstein PhD.

Dr. Dana Saperstein – Living an Empathic Life

Dr. Dana 00:11

There are two basic motivating forces fear and love. When we're afraid, we pull back from life. When we're in love, we open up to all that life has to offer with passion, excitement, and acceptance.

Fear Me Out 00:30

Coming to you from our studio in Santa Barbara, California, this is the fear me out podcast. We're not your typical Self Help Program. Our show takes a deep dive into those psychological issues that affect us on a daily basis. We hope to shift your perspective and have you experiencing emotions differently. Now, here are your hosts, Kim foskey, and Dr. Dana Saperstein.

Kim Fauskee 00:52

So if you listen to the podcast, long enough for I've listened to multiple episodes of me speaking, my mother called me different, pretty much throughout my life. And that wasn't a compliment. I was different. And I grew up in a generation, where boys weren't supposed to show their emotions, weren't supposed to show their sensitivity, you know, I was afraid of my own shadow. I did a lot of crying and, and was scolded for it. And it wasn't until later on in life and in through psychotherapy, and some hypnotherapy, and a in a book called highly sensitive people by Elaine Aaron, did I fully understand in begin to embrace that I had this empathic ability in was this highly sensitive person throughout that course, I've come into contact with quite a few other empathic and highly sensitive people. When I thought I was just an anomaly out there. There happens to be a big brotherhood and sisterhood. And the reason I mentioned that is because I think Dana and I, in our conversation thought it was important to, to bring this topic up. And to put it out in the interviews, universe, because I think it is a little confusing for most people that either don't know or understand that either have a child or married to a friend that has this high intensity of emotions, and has this ability of higher empathy and is highly more sensitive and and, and it's just different and can't put their finger on it. So then I think it's important, from your clinical perspective, for our audience to understand what an empath actually is.

Dana Saperstein 02:46

An Empath by definition is someone who feels their feelings way more strongly than the average person. I think it affects about 5% of the population, people are in the 95th percentile in terms of sensitivity and emotionality that I would consider to be an empath. So you feel your feelings way more strongly than the average person. And you also feel more deeply about the things that matter to you. I can't tell you how many people will come to see me and said to me, you know, can you help me not be so affected by the things that happen in my life on an emotional level? And most of the time? My answer is, No, I can't really, because sensitivity is a genetic quality. Very much like the color of your

skin and how tall you are all you know, the color of your eyes, all of that sort of thing. We don't seem to have trouble with certain kinds of sensitivity, like I have blue eyes, my light, my eyes are way more sensitive to light than someone who has brown eyes. I'm designed to live in the northern and southern latitudes where somebody with dark eyes is designed to live close to the equator. Same with my skin colors, very light, I have to put on 10 Different kinds of sunscreen in order to be out in the world. Whereas a lot of people I know with darker complexion have a much easier time. You know, coping with that kind of sensitivity, which happens on a physical level. But what we're mostly talking about here is the sensitivity that happens on an emotional level. Sadly, it causes a lot of problems for children that are born as really sensitive empathic people, sometimes in utero, but certainly from the moment that they arrive on Earth, because in order to feel a sense of security, the people around you have to be willing to take responsibility for whatever pain that they're carrying. And most people don't even realize they're carrying pain, let alone spend their lives trying to come to terms with it. So as a child, both you and I know that right from the beginning, we start to absorb the pain of the people that bring us into the world and try really hard to save them from themselves. You know, it'd be like being in a room and the rooms on fire from a sensitive empathic perspective and everybody around you exactly like, yeah, it's a little warm in here, but it's certainly not anything to be concerned about. Whereas you're looking around thinking, Oh, my God, the place is going to burn down into second. And most of the time, you're made to feel ashamed of your sensitivity and made to feel like you make a big deal about things that are not important. And so very quickly, you're here to keep you learn to keep your mouth shut, and you learn to do the best you can to certainly not express your sensitivity in any overt way, because you're generally speaking going to be shamed, and made to feel bad about yourself for that, that has the added effect of not being able to trust the love that comes your way. Because if you create a false version of yourself, that you present to the world that's more palatable for the people around you, and they love you, you can't trust that love, because it's based on false pretenses. So not only does it create feelings of anxiety and insecurity, it also creates really strong feelings of internal failure. Because no matter how hard you try to take on the pain of the people that bring you into this world, you're gonna fail, because it's humanly impossible for a child to take enough pain into his or her body to be able to make the people around you, okay? So what you experienced as you grew up is a profound feeling of failure and inadequacy that the average person doesn't feel, because they're not trying to manage the pain of the people around them. When I was in school, this concept used to be called the identified patient in the family. That would be the kid in the family that carries all the pathology, and usually either acts out in the world or against themselves. And what I've come to learn over the course of time is that it's really the sensitive person that feels really out of control, and really scared and helpless. And then it creates a whole nother set of problems. Because how do you trust reality when your reality is so fundamentally different than the people around you? So a lot of times, you can end up feeling like you're crazy. Like, there's something wrong with you. Why do I feel this way? Why am I Why is life so hard? Why do I cry so easily? Why does the world feel so scary to me when everybody around me is acting like it's just another normal day? So it's extremely confusing and overwhelming?

Kim Fauskee 07:22

Yeah, like I, like I said in the intro, you know, for me, I wish I would have figured it out at age 12, or 13, or 16, and not probably well into my 30s. If I wasn't 40, by the time that I fully understood that concept, probably had read that book by Elena. And at that point, it was probably, when I read that book, I read it three times over and over, because I thought she was actually writing it about me, it was the first time

that I had actually read something that completely identified with me. And it was, it was certainly a catalyst for my healing. And for my figuring out from within who I was, at that point, because everything that you had just mentioned, in terms of identifying, you know, this type of person within a family is everything that happened to me, right, because I knew I was different. I just didn't know why I was different. And so you keep curate this life or build this facade. So nobody knows that you are that person. Right? Because, you know, friends didn't know that I cried a lot at home. You know, I didn't certainly cry and in front of friends, you know, I held those tears back and, and tried not to be sensitive, tried to, you know, be that person I was told I was supposed to be when I was growing up. And you know, boys don't have emotions and boys don't cry. And so I had to, you know, I had to buck up and figure out, you know, and become an actor in my own life. And so there was certainly this part of me that knew something was off all along. Right. And I think when I got to finding help, psychological help with it, you know, I think it was one of the things that kind of drove me into like, okay, I can I can do this I can sit with a psychologist and, and go through this because I want to feel or I shouldn't say I want to feel but I want to understand what I'm feeling right there was just something constantly off in there. And I think again, going back through those characteristics, I mean, all those characteristics followed me through life, right, taking on other people's pain, taking out other people's emotions, trying to be the Peacekeeper trying to be the rescuer. Right I you know, as my first career was as a first responder because again, that's where I found my validity and credibility, because if I could take, put myself aside and take care of somebody else's problem, then that's where I was going to see, you know, find value in somebody who's going to see me for the real person who I was. So I was looking externally to solve that problem, when I should have been looking inside myself and figuring out that, yeah, it's a hard wire issue. Right. And like I said before, it's a blessing and a curse. But, you know, I finally got there.

Dana Saperstein 10:37

Well, I think it's really important for people to understand, again, that it is a genetic quality, it's not something that you have control over. And I think that the only way that you can influence it, like a lot of people do is by using substances in order to try to numb yourself or, or neutralize some of the depth of feeling that you go through life with. So a lot of people turn to drugs and alcohol or or overworking, or some sort of compulsive behavior in order to try to numb themselves so that they don't feel what's happening around them. Because most of the time, you really are made to feel like there's something wrong with you that you feel things as strongly as you do. And that's a burden. It's really hard to go through life feeling, sort of like you're a crazy person for feeling what you feel. And it can also lead you to feel quite ashamed of yourself. Because depending on the nature of the person's pain that you're taking into your body, a lot of the pain that parents carry has to do with their own abuse and their own trauma, and a lot of shame that gets embedded in their body that you take on yourself, and then it feels as though it's you rather than really recognize the pain belongs to somebody else. So a lot of times when I'm working with somebody, and they describe a symptom, or a certain way of talking to themselves, I say, well, Whose voice is that? Are you sure that that's really how you feel about yourself? Or is this something that that you sort of took on as a result of trying to manage the people around you, and I will tell you that at least 90% of the time, it's not their voice speaking inside of them. It's somebody else's voice, they've internalized and taken out on themselves. So it's difficult to live with what I would call multiple realities, you have your own personal reality that nobody acknowledges, you have the the reality of the people that bring you into this world that most people are pretty much married to. And so you have to become a part of that way of living, which is to not feel things very strongly and

to pretend like the problems in the family don't exist. And sometimes it's even overlaid with a religious structure that imposes a whole nother set of values and realities that are really hard to accept, because the more sensitive you are, sometimes the more hypocrisy that you feel, in relation to organized religion. And I'm not trying to speak poorly of organized religion, but most of the people I know, that questioned their religious philosophy that their family brought into the lives that are sensitive people were made to feel really ashamed of themselves and really terrible about the questions they asked and, and the curiosity that they had about things that they found were not easily digested by them that everybody else was able to digest without too much trouble. So it can be really confusing and most kids are whatever problems happen in a family they believe is their fault, and they take it out on themselves, and it creates a whole host of bad feelings about yourself and, and causes a lot of pain.

Kim Fauskee 13:59

So, you know, this is not something that's taught to you, in school, being young, there has to be some, you know, psychological sophistication in the family. And I'm talking about currently now, to kind of figure out that, that maybe that's who you are, or somebody explaining to you who you are, but I'm guessing that people that come to see you don't know, initially that they're empathic, or a highly sensitive person, or both. I don't know if they're synonymous with each other. But obviously, it comes out to you in their underlying symptomology.

Dana Saperstein 14:41

Well, and just the way that the person carries themself is enough to be regardless of what their symptoms might be. For me, it's really easy to read. The level of sensitivity of the person walks in my door because without realizing we advertise who we are in many, many different ways and because I have learned to embrace my sensitivity. And I trust my intuition implicitly, it makes it really easy for me to get a feeling about where somebody's coming from and it doesn't take long at all. And so people are often surprised when on the first visit or two and I asked them, well, let's talk about sensitivity. And they look at me like, Well, why would that have anything to do with anything? And generally speaking, once I help them understand that they possess that particular trait and how it's affected them. The most common response I get is, How come and all the therapy I've ever had, nobody's ever brought this up before. Why, why is this something that's so important to you, but nobody's ever talked to me about it and I said, Well, we all have a different idea about these things. But my life is filled with really sensitive people, both personally and professionally. And so it makes a great deal of sense to me, based on my own experience, and certainly hundreds of people that have come to see me that possess this set of qualities and traits. And so it just feels very logical and easy for me to identify.

Kim Fauskee 16:10

So maybe I'm an anomaly. But you know, when it was first brought to my attention, like most things in life, I'm pretty skeptical about right. And so I think it took a while for me to really understand, you know, I'm thinking, Okay, I'm empathic. Yes, I'm sensitive, okay, I get that. But, you know, is, is just, is this just a label, you know, for lack of any other better, you know, diagnosis or terminology of who I am, right. And so I think, you know, the more and more that I talked about it in therapy, and the more and more I read about it, it finally became okay, this is who I am. So it am I a bit of an anomaly that or is it is to most of your patients that you talk to about this, when you talk when you have this sensitivity discussion

with them, all of a sudden feel like a ton of bricks had been lifted off their shoulder, they totally get that they're an empath.

Dana Saperstein 17:16

I wish everybody was as accepting of it as I would like them to be. I mean, there's a man, I see who's in his 70s, that every time we speak about it, he starts to cry. Because he has spent his whole life fighting it and wishing that they were really believing there's something wrong with him and wishing that he could get rid of it. So it's not always easy to accept. There's another woman I know, that I've been working with for a really long time. And finally, after years and years, something clicked inside of her. And she started to realize why the world has affected her as strongly as it has and, and why she reacts the way she does to most of the experiences she's had. And it's hard to accept sometimes because it does single you out. And it does separate you out from the average person in ways that can be uncomfortable because the world is designed for the average. And there's nothing wrong with average, I'm of average height set about that. And, you know, a month on my shoe size is average, there's four people with my shoe size and any other and I'm not upset about that. You know, so it just depends on how much it scares you actually more than anything else, because it is a really scary way to live. Plus, it can be extremely lonely when I work with adolescents especially, they wonder how come it's so hard for me to relate to my peers? And why do I feel so different and you know, people often approach them with their problems and they become junior psychologists. But they often feel kind of lonely because they can tell that they're just so fundamentally different than the people around them. And it can be lonely. A lot of times it's really hard to find people that are very much like yourself that you feel a close connection to and usually it can become apparent actually when you're in elementary school that a lot of kids struggle because things affect them though so strongly emotionally that they're made fun of or they're kind of singled out and bullied and all that sort of thing because you know, if you've if you're a bully, you're going to find the weakest link. Not that being sensitive is weak, but it's perceived that as being really vulnerable by you know, my bullies especially No, I

Kim Fauskee 19:32

certainly got picked on Yeah, especially during adolescence right. Because they certainly can pick up on your weakness. Yeah. I'm lucky that I grew to my six four stature relatively quickly. So in my teens that stopped pretty quickly, but I definitely was that weak link there, whether it's a diagnosed This, whether it's an identification of who you are or whatever semantic you want to use to describe that. So you figure out and I think this was the hard part, or a harder part for me was okay figured this out, I fully embrace it, I get it. Now, what do I do with it?

Dana Saperstein 20:19

Well, I think it's a gift personally. But that's a very biased perspective, because I wouldn't have the life that I do. Without it. I mean, it's the perfect characteristics and qualities to have, as a therapist, I've actually helped two or three, four other people become therapists that I very quickly realized had very strong empathic qualities and were designed to be therapists. So I've helped them in that, in that journey. But I will say that initially, when it first starts to affect you it can be, it can be really scary. I know I've told this story before on our podcast, but there was a 12 year old girl who came to see me a number of years ago who was starting junior high school, and we all know junior high schools, very painful, uncomfortable time in a young person's life. And her mom would drive her to school. And when

she got to the parking lot and stepped out of her car, she just started having panic attacks. As soon as she stepped out of the car, she was fine all the way to school, it was really excited about going to school. But as soon as she stepped out of the car, she just completely lost any sort of feeling of security and had a very, very significant panic attack, trying to make it through the parking lot into the school. And fortunately, she was referred to me by a family friend, and you know, this really lovely girl comes bouncing into my office. And I asked her, you know, what's, what was happening with her? And she described that situation. And I very quickly could see, absent without any question how empathic, this little young woman was. And so I said to her, can you tell whether the panic that you're having is coming from something inside of you, or it's coming from outside of you? And, you know, she kind of looked at me like, I was nuts, like, What are you talking about? And I said, Well, I'm sure you've been in a really big storm when the winds are blowing really hard. And it has a really strong effect on people when the wind blows really hard. And sometimes it can even have a negative effect. If the wind is strong enough, it can scare you. And that's not something that's coming from inside of you that's coming from the outside. So I asked her if she would please, when she steps out of the car, see if she can tell whether the emotional wind is blowing really hard at her, or whether her feelings are coming from inside of her. And she came back a few days later, and was really clear about the fact that stepping out of the car, brought like a rush of emotional pain to her from the outside. And that made a great deal of sense to me, because I think everybody that gets out of the car, and it's walking toward their junior high school, especially initially is wondering, is anybody gonna like me? Am I gonna have any friends? Are people going to think I'm attractive? Will I spend my days here in pain and alone and all of that stuff. And she was absorbing everybody's fear, stepping out of the car. So I asked her if she could figure out some way of wrapping herself in something that might help her feel safe, just like you put a coat on when it's really cold outside. And she said, Well, I love cotton candy. And I said, Well, when you get out of the car, just wrap yourself up in cotton candy, and understand that it's going to keep the pain of other people from coming into your body. And the only thing that your body's going to take in is goodwill and love and good feelings. And the rest of it's going to bounce off the cotton candy. And you know, her mom looked at me like I was nuts. But she was kind of thrilled by the idea. And so she went to school, and she tried it and it worked perfectly, because what she needed was an emotional coat in order to feel safe. And so she came back the next week, and she was so excited. And said to me, it worked and I feel so good. And guess what my dad is just like me, and he was always wondering why the world affected in the way that it did it. So me and my daddy are both really sensitive people. And he has cotton candy around him. And I have cotton candy around me and I never saw her again after that because she was fine.

Kim Fauskee 24:18

So who knew cotton candy give me a buffer? Well,

Dana Saperstein 24:21

I mean, whatever the image is that a person can use in order to protect themselves from pain. It's not up to me to decide what the image should be. There's no somebody I know who uses clouds as a way of protecting themselves. There's whatever your imagination can come up with, it doesn't really make any difference because if you recognize that it's no different than protecting yourself from the cold, then it's really quite simple to take care of yourself.

Kim Fauskee 24:49

Are empaths more susceptible to other certain psychological issues?

Dana Saperstein 24:56

Um, well I would say that in a certain way, if you have depression, or anxiety as an empath, you're going to feel it more strongly than the average person because you feel everything more strongly. So I guess in that way, the answer is yes. But you also have the ability to feel your intuition on a much more exquisite level than the average person. So in my mind, that gives you a connection to something that I believe is really sacred, which is your intuition. And your equipment is designed to feel it way more strongly than the average person, which to me can create a balance. And to help you feel much more connected to yourself and the world around you in a very vital way, certainly increases your ability to come up with novel solutions to problems and to be much more creative than the average person.

Kim Fauskee 25:51

So that's how you use the your empathic ability to your advantage.

Dr. Dana 25:54

That's how I use it. Because I learned a long time ago that the biggest mistakes that I have ever made, were not trusting my intuition. And talking myself out of what I know is true. So I'll tell you for as long as I can remember, I absolutely do not mess with what my intuition tells me. I look at it as an incredible gift. And I look treat it as though it's sacred. And it really, it doesn't prevent me from having difficulty in my life. I mean, everybody has pain, there's no shortage of, of pain that a person can suffer. But it does provide me with a certain amount of resilience that I don't think that I would have otherwise.

Kim Fauskee 26:34

One of the commonalities and I think we already spoke about it, at the beginning of the podcast, one of the commonalities that at least I found in talking to other empaths and highly sensitive people is, and I want to call it our ability, because it's a curse of taking on other people's pain and emotion. Right. That is, for me, I won't talk about anybody else. But for me, that was the hardest thing for me to overcome. Because when you talk about people coming into the office, and saying, Can you help me not care as much? And it's a literal impossibility, right? Because we always say, you know, the best thing about life is all you need is somebody that cares, right? And your life, and then your life is golden. So it's weird that somebody would come in and say, you know, I helped me not care as much and, and I fully get that, because I've, I've had that thought process many times, it's like, Jesus, why do I care so much? Why am I so invested in this? Why do I feel this so strongly? You know, and, like you said, I mean, you can cover that up with, you know, substances and, or other things to try and get away from it. But you know, it's always going to be there, you know, the next time it happens, it's going to be just as sensitive and just as painful. I asked you this question 100 times before maybe we've talked about on the podcast, but again, and I and I'm finally as you know, I'm finally just have gotten there, where I can still care, but not take on that other people's emotional energy or or, or negativity or emotional baggage or whatever you want one a carer I see it's there. But I don't own it anymore. And but it took me a long time to get there.

Dana Saperstein 28:30

Well, it does. For most people, and most people never get there. I mean, the rescue fantasy is the most common way of approaching romantic relationships in our world. And that is for a reason. Because if you are brought up believing and experiencing love as being responsible for the people in your life and managing their pain, what's going to stop you from doing that in a romantic relationship. And so I think that unless you consciously understand what you're doing, and find a way to, to be compassionate without taking people's pain on it is going to take you down. Something I had to learn a long time ago, otherwise, I would have been squished flat by the amount of pain that I welcome into my world. Because, again, you know that one of my specialties is post traumatic stress. And I work with people who've had the most unspeakable things happen to them as children that you could imagine. So, how can I be in the face of all that pain and have it not affect me? In a in a negative way? I mean, I'm not going to tell you I don't feel sad sometimes when people describe the things that happened to them, but I don't take anybody's pain into my body at all. Absolutely not. Number one, I think it would be disrespectful. And number two, I think that if I took your pain into my body that would give you the message that you're not capable of managing your own pain. And that's also disrespectful. So my proceed, my job has been to introduce you to your pain and to show you how to release it. But for me not to take it in and take it on in any way. And I think that that is a true expression of love from my definition. But it's almost irresistible when you're used to it and done it your whole life. And it kind of feels weird not to do it once you've once you're used to it. But I look at it as a spiritual issue that there's plenty of healing energy in the world. In my mind, it comes from God, you can describe it any way you like. And that's the source of where the pain can be released. So I don't have to take it into my body in order to process it. I can help you release it. Like when we did our episode on hypnosis, and you were dealing with the pain of you know, being inside your mom and being told that you're going to be given away and feeling the abandonment, I didn't take your pain into my body. But you certainly were able to release huge amounts of it just by allowing it to leave your body. So to me, that's the secret is being present and being loving and, and connected but not monkeying with people's pain because it does nothing but create problems to do that.

Kim Fauskee 31:17

So you have a psychological sophistication. And you do it for a living. Right. So it sounds you know, what you're saying sounds completely obvious, right? But and I, you know, we've had you and I've had this discussion many times, I was trying to fathom how you do this on a day in day out basis. And you kept telling me the same thing, what you just told our audience just now. And it took a long time for me to have it resonate with me. So I was very cognizant about what you had said, and how it applies of not taking on pain, but it was it was still difficult for me to do it. So you know, you don't have to be an empath to take on somebody else's pain. There's certainly a lot of people out there that aren't empathic that take on other people's pain. How do you explain to the average person again, how do you explain to the average person, that it's not your responsibility? Because again, it goes back to the caring question, right? Because I fully believe that most humans care. For the most part, they're not malicious. They care whether they care about themselves more than they care about somebody else. That's a different story. But I think most humans have that caring ability in them, right? It's innate, it's innate in them, so. So all of us are taking on some level of somebody else's emotional baggage. Unless you've been psychologically trained not not to do that and understand why you were doing it, how you did it, and how not to do it anymore. And so I'm guessing I'm asking again, is how does the average person learn how not to do this?

Dana Saperstein 33:07

Well, it always starts with an intellectual explanation, obviously.

Kim Fauskee 33:13

And like I said, before, you know, when we talk about other really good podcasts out there, and other good psychology podcasts, and Andrew Huberman and stuff like that there's a very highly intellectual explanation to everything, which is completely fine, because it makes it interesting to listen to, and it's, you know, if you're into intellectual conversations and, and topics and stuff like that, it's great. It's great to hear, and I'm not putting them down, because I think they do a really good job, what they say, but the average person isn't going to conceptualize what Dr. Huberman says on his podcast about those things. So what I want is that, you know, especially for audiences, okay, and again, I'm not trying to get the magic wand out here and say, Oh, hey, we can just tap on the magic wand and we can fix it. You never have to take on somebody's emotional baggage. But is there a way? Is there a simplification? For people out there to say, Okay, if you're doing this, instead of saying, Don't do it, how do you not do it?

Dana Saperstein 34:17

I think it's a question of faith more than anything else, because I wasn't taught this in psychology school. There was no mention of how to handle other people's pain in the course of my educational and clinical training. That wasn't part of the picture at all. I get more advertisements about how do you deal with being burned out as a therapist, than any other kind of education which I

Kim Fauskee 34:41

can't fathom for the life of me that that is not something that's taught to a therapist or to a psychologist?

Dana Saperstein 34:48

Well, I don't even think of the concept of taking somebody's pain into your body as part of the psychology of psychology, because all the invitations instead of getting retreats are all how to recover from burnout. They don't tell you how not to get burnt out, they tell you how to recover from it.

Kim Fauskee 35:07

Well, that would have been me, right? Because if I decided that I wanted to be a psychologist in my life, and I was switching places with you, I never understood why I was so sensitive. That's why we'll be going to the burnout retreat, because I couldn't do this day in and day out.

Dana Saperstein 35:22

That's right. And that is the case for most people, because that's not what we're taught in school. What we're taught in school is diagnosis, treatment, planning, and helping people resolve their pathology. And that's the going notion by the state of California and most

Kim Fauskee 35:40

the slap that label on their forehead and send them on their way. Yeah. Now,

Dana Saperstein 35:44

I know that you and I've talked about this many times before, but when I was in my 30s, I had a dream when I went to sleep, and I went to sleep, feeling incredibly confused about my spiritual connection. And I really did not fully understand what it all meant, and what it was all about for me. So again, that dream was instrumental in this process, because part of the dream was, you know, my asking God who came to my door? Well, you know, what's the deal? What's your purpose in my life? What are what, you know, what? Why do I want to believe? And why do I want to surrender to your love and will and all that stuff? And the answer to that on a professional level was that, you know, God said to me, I'm here to help you in your chosen profession, because you've got to get it, you have dedicated yourself to being of service to other people that are in an enormous amount of pain. And so we're going to do it together. Your job is to be the human representative of my Well, if that makes sense. So that's when I came to understand that God's purpose is to help with the pain. And my purpose is to help introduce you, I guess, in a certain way, to where your pain is coming from so that you can release it. Now I get that a lot of people don't believe in God. And that's okay. Because this little girl that I was telling, or young woman that I was telling you about, I didn't say anything about God or any of that stuff. I just introduced her to the concept that there's a code that you can put on yourself, to protect you from other people's pain. And you can make it super complicated. If you want to put on the coat as the safe. It's the superhero analogy. That's right. Kenny may not be a superhero, but it's the analogy, right? Well, in my mind, and again, I could be completely delusional, I'll be the first one to admit it, because I have no proof. But in my mind, there is no energy stronger than God's love. So all of the evil in the pain and all the stuff that's real in the world cannot come close to overcoming God's love and goodwill. So that's why I feel safe. And that's why I can invite whatever, whatever situation finds its way into my life, because there's nothing that's going to come that's going to harm me, unless I choose to take it in. And I already learned a long time ago, I don't have to do that to help someone. And it doesn't have to be super complicated. I don't meditate, I don't do any sort of ritual, anything. I just accept what I was invited to do. And I experienced that every single day. So it's reinforced on a daily basis. And it just really reinforces my faith, for lack of a better way of putting it. And because I have that faith, I don't have, I don't feel afraid when I'm in the face of other people's pain, I don't feel overwhelmed by it, I don't feel like there's nothing I can do. I always feel a sense of hope in a certain way, that if a person is willing to go on the journey of healing, I can accompany them, and they can release the pain, it's not going to hurt them not going to hurt me. And it will just go backward where it belongs, I guess for lack of a better way of putting it. Because it just evens it just evens things out, I guess for lack of a better way of putting it.

Kim Fauskee 39:05

So it's really it's really the development of that buffer, or that coat as you described it.

Dana Saperstein 39:10

Yeah, I mean, not lucky. We don't. I mean, I don't think you fast when you look out the window and see it's raining. You don't put your bathing suit on and go off sit out in your lounge chair. You're just dealing with what's right in front of you, right. It's gonna be cold today. So do not put on clothes and, and you know, wear a jacket and maybe even take an umbrella and you don't seem like that's a problem for you. You just deal with whatever the situation is, in a straightforward way. But somehow when it comes to our emotional lives, we make it so complicated and have to go through all of this ritual on all this, this

and that I and I'm really sorry, but I just don't think it's unnecessary. I think you can keep it as simple as you are willing, based on whatever choice you make in that regard. So I just tried to teach people to keep it real Really simple. If you want to develop a spiritual relationship, and you all learn how not to take on people's pain, then ask for help in that regard. That's gotta take the pain for you. Or if you don't want to look at it from a spiritual perspective, ask the universe or that nature, whatever, whatever you want to, but just make sure that you don't continue the habit of trying to manage people's pain, because that will continually take you down and make you feel terrible.

Kim Fauskee 40:27

And we're not talking about the loss of empathy or the loss of sympathy or the loss of caring, though I don't think

Dana Saperstein 40:33

so. I mean, maybe I'm, again, incredibly delusional, but But I believe that I approach what I do with it with as much warmth and, and goodwill and love as I possibly can. Because I really, really love what I do. And I really enjoy the people that come to see me. And I think I enjoy a lot of the people that come to see me more than they enjoy themselves. Because most of us, we're our own worst enemy.

Kim Fauskee 40:58

Well, and I agree with you, because, you know, I followed that path for a long time and again, until recently, and having now multiple times that I could have easily fallen back into that same pattern, and didn't and didn't take it on and still was able to show, you know, sympathy and empathy for that person but didn't take on that their energy at that point. It's really freeing. And like I said before, like you I think you mentioned before it is different the first time it happened. So you're like, what just happened? Yeah, because I just didn't respond to that the way I normally respond to that. So how did that work again? And so you know, through that practice, and through being cognizant of that, and I never, I don't know if I was ever explained to use a coat or a berry. I don't don't remember that. But I don't use that right. For me, it was being cognizant of the fact of, okay, understanding what's going on here. This is not my problem. This is not my problem. This is somebody else's problem. If I choose, I choose to help them, I'll choose to help them but I'm not going to take on that energy, right from them, or the negativity from them.

Dana Saperstein 42:11

Do you think it's diminished your love for that person? Or your care for that person that you don't take their pain into your body?

Kim Fauskee 42:18

No, not at all? I don't see, you know, and I had to think back on that the last few times it's happened. I don't know, it hasn't. I mean, I've seen them a certain way, whether I would have taken on or not. In that way, I think it's actually helped me actually be more compassionate by not thinking at all. Yeah. Because I think there's a certain defense, when you do take it on, I think there's a certain defense mechanism that automatically kicks in, and then that defense mechanism, you know, all of a sudden puts you on the defensive, and you can become the asshole at that at that point, because you've taken it on it's you're projecting it back to them. So yeah, absolutely. I think I've become more compassionate

and probably, you know, a better friend or confidant in not taking it on and being able to truly, you know, have sympathy and empathy for them.

Dana Saperstein 43:13

Well, and I think, you know, Kim, I think it coincided with your developing faith. Because, you know, when you did your psychedelic journey, you had such a profound spiritual awakening. And since that time, you've had four or five dreams that have been incredibly reinforcing of the fact that you're not alone in the world. And that there is a force, whatever you want to call it, God, whatever, that's there to accompany you through this journey, and is there to help you with whatever it is that you're trying to come to terms with. I mean, you told me you had a dream lesson, and I'm not sure if you're comfortable talking about it, but it was amazing.

Kim Fauskee 43:54

Yeah, yeah, I was just thinking about that, you know, before we started recording, I did, I did have that, you know, dream where it kind of took me back into when I was married. And some of the things that I was blamed for, during the marriage that I had completely forgotten about. It was like, Oh, my God, you know, it's one of those dreams, do you think am I actually dreaming? Or am I actually awake thinking about this? And the dream kept telling me that you're not responsible for this, but it was kind of this Hey, remember this, remember, this happened? Remember, this happened? But you're not responsible for that. That wasn't you? That was being preached that was a fear being projected upon you. Okay. And the interesting part was that I didn't wake up confused. I didn't wake up with a level of anxiety, or wake up, like, in this profuse sweat or with this ton of weight on my shoulders. I woke up like, oh, I fully get it now.

Dana Saperstein 44:52

Yeah, because again, the message that you got is that loving someone does not mean

Kim Fauskee 44:58

healing their pain. Right, that's exactly the message I got.

Dana Saperstein 45:02

It means it means not taking it on as your responsibility and believing in that magical fantasy that if I just save this person, they'll love me forever. And that comes from the moment of your conception. And the moment that your mother understood that she was pregnant and didn't want to, and did everything you could to take her pain in and make her life better when you were the one that was being given away. And you were the one that was suffering, the abandonment and the terror of, of, you know, being given up by your mom, but it was all about you being a bad person and causing pain. So how would that not become your template for love later on in your life. And so now what you're coming to understand really deeply and really clearly, is that the relationship to pain has outlived its usefulness. And you don't have to be responsible for the pain of the people that you care about and that you love. And that your job is to show them what it looks like to be cared for in love, but not in a self destructive way.

Kim Fauskee 46:01

Is Ram still a relevant term when we talk about computer storage and stuff. But anyway, it seems like I have, like my RAM has been restored, or at least or it has been enhanced, you clean your cache, I clean my cache or something. That's it. That's really what it feels like. And again, I don't. Again, I know you mentioned the psychedelic journey. And this was not an endorsement to go take psychedelic type drugs. But again, when we talk about modalities, and again, this is my story in my journey, and other people have other stories and other journeys and use other modalities. But again, using those modalities to in my favor, and especially the hypnotherapy episode we did a few weeks ago that aired, has certainly continued this healing journey for me, and I don't think I would have had whether you call them epiphanies or whether you call them reinforcements or whatever term you want to use, it wouldn't have had them without seeking out these other modalities. I know that, again, that we did get a lot of feedback, especially from the hypnotherapy episode, and people use certain terms that I'm uncomfortable with and in calling me a hero and things like that, I certainly don't see myself as a hero. But I do know that a lot of people said, Well, if you can sit on a couch there and do that and put that out into the universe, I certainly can do it in, in, in with the privacy of my own therapist there. So again, I want to go back and tell the audience that, you know, if you're still dealing with old patterns, or you're still any of the things that we talk about, tend to resonate with you. Try different, try some modality, try some other modalities, you know, get get that help get the professional help seek that because, again, I wouldn't be here speaking with you about any of this stuff. If I didn't do that.

Dana Saperstein 48:03

You know, the other thing I want to make sure that is super clear is that I do not see myself as a special person. I've had some really amazing spiritual and other experiences in my life, but I don't think it's because I'm a special person. I think it's because I'm open to it. And that my imagination is incredibly vivid and always has been as a result of being super sensitive. I remember, as a kid always having a, I got a note from my second grade teacher saying you need to have your son examined by somebody because he has such a vivid imagination right now, like somehow that was a bad thing. I remember so clearly that my mom's saying, you know, your teacher thinks there's something wrong with you because of your imagination. And I was so confused by that. Because, you know, just seems so weird to be criticized for being extremely imaginative and so I think that that's why I'm as fortunate as I am in a certain way is because I'm always looking and always wanting to have magical experiences in my life not based on pathology, but just based on I guess a spiritual connection.

Kim Fauskee 49:10

No, I used to mean, I've teased you before about why God come visit you but not me. And again, I don't want to get on this god topic because there's some people out here who don't believe in God or whatever. But again, I teased you about that and and what you said about being open I think is spot on because when I started opening myself up when I had whether it was a spiritual awakening, whether it was a spiritual we reawakening because again, I did have one foot in one foot out. So I wasn't completely anti but when I started opening myself up, boy that the light shone a lot brighter.

Dana Saperstein 49:55

And I think it takes a lot of courage to do that because what if it doesn't happen? What if you are surrounded, and then you don't feel anything? How foolish would you?

Kim Fauskee 50:03

Oh, I've done that though. I have sorted I've given up, I've given up, I've given up 100 times before because I thought this was my lot in life, right, I was going to be uncomfortable, I was going to be depressed, I was going to be whatever I was going to be unlovable. And so I gave up 100 different times in my life, right? Because I had to trust my intuition. And my intuition kept telling me something different, that they're there. Now, you can give up, but we're just going to keep telling you that there's something better for you out there. Right, that there's you know, that you just got to open yourself up for it. And, and have faith and be confident and, and it will show you that that's been happening to me a lot more in the last the last number of months, but a lot, but certainly a lot more than the last couple of years. That way. So, you know, again, going back to opening up and having a much broader perspective on your life. And like you said, being curious about certain things, I'm certainly don't have to go take LSD, and certainly you don't have to do hypnotherapy, but just having this being curious about life and being curious about things certainly would broaden your perspective and having that open openness does bring a lot more light to your life.

Dana Saperstein 51:27

You know, I think that another quality that you're describing, without realizing you're describing it is that when you're a really sensitive person, you have an inordinate need for stimulation in order to feel a sense of well being.

Kim Fauskee 51:40

And then it goes to the opposite side where you need a ton more downtime by yourself.

Dana Saperstein 51:45

Well, that is true in order to regenerate yourself trying to be capable of, of the kind of seeking the stimulation that you're looking for. Because I know one thing about my experience in the world is that I cannot get enough information. I read incessantly. I'm always trying to ask people millions of questions, because I'm just insanely curious about everything. And I have a really strong need for that kind of stimulation. And I don't think it's unhealthy. I you know, sometimes it drives me crazy, like, Okay, can I just chill? But my, my, my mind and my buddy are always seeking more and more and more, and I don't think it's an unhealthy way.

Kim Fauskee 52:30

Where and I was going to ask for clarification. I mean, you're you're you're seeking it for knowledge, you're not seeking it for answers. No, I think is is an important differentiation.

Dana Saperstein 52:39

I don't read self help books. I actually, embarrassingly enough, don't read psychology books, because

Kim Fauskee 52:45

because I think we've put down the professional right after truth be

Dana Saperstein 52:48

told, when I was getting my education. I read all of Stephen King's books as an example. And I would think to myself, This guy knows more about human nature than any psychological theorist I've ever read in my entire life.

Kim Fauskee 53:03

Well, that's what I was saying. I mean, if you actually read a bunch of literature out there, and I'm talking about, not not so much some of the classics, but some of the great writers out there, and you actually read some stuff from some from the great philosophers out there about life, you probably be the significantly better psychologist or whatever, then then most that are clinically trained in that way.

Dana Saperstein 53:27

Well, what I learned from Stephen King's examples about greed and lust and, and, you know, fear of being failure, and all the different,

Kim Fauskee 53:37

you have to start a new psychology school now, Stephen King's writings, well, because

Dana Saperstein 53:41

he, as Elise in the olden days, was so descriptive in his ideas about human nature. And I'm just super curious about all this stuff. And it helps. It helps make life more interesting. I know that off the subject here, but I think that part of being a sensitive person is a thirst for knowledge and understanding.

Kim Fauskee 54:04

So before we before we, in this, this conversation on on empathetic and, and empathis and highly sensitive people, people out there listening right now that either married to one, have have one as a child, or in a relationship with one, have one as a friend work with somebody that they've probably now deemed to have that characteristic. So if you're not one, but you deal with one on a regular basis, how should you be dealing with those type of people?

Dana Saperstein 54:41

Well, I think the most important thing is to try not to shame somebody for things that they have no control over. Because a lot of times, it's really uncomfortable to be around somebody who's really highly emotional and it can be a little bit scary. The other thing is that if you have empathic people in your life, they can read you really well. If you have secrets, it's going to be really uncomfortable for you because there's a divine your secrets, whether you like it or not. And so that a lot of times, that's why parents shut their kids down, that are really sensitive, because they don't want their pain to be exposed. They don't want their secrets to come out. Because they're too ashamed of those things into embarr embarrassed to, you know, take responsibility for them. So, it's not easy having somebody in your life that's like that. I mean, again, I've joked before I can clear out a room like nobody's business, all I got to do is tell them what I do for a living, and everybody wants to run away from me, unless you're somebody who's psychologically minded, and then, you know, sort of enjoys having that kind of conversation.

Kim Fauskee 55:39

Well, I feel your pain on that one. Because being the single guy in the room, dating and somebody that's trying to be close to the vast I can read them. And, you know, in and ask for that type of transparency, or they're trying to tell me, you know, one thing and I'm reading something else, and I call him on that, it makes somebody hugely unconfident, comfortable. Yes. When you it's like having X ray vision, and you're seeing them naked. Yes. There, which, again, is a blessing and a curse, right? It either it's a blessing that you seem for the way you are or it's it's a curse, because you can't stand them now.

Dana Saperstein 56:19

Well, I don't really mind clearing out a room because if people are afraid, it's not my responsibility to make them comfortable. I can't help be the person that I am. So I don't see.

Kim Fauskee 56:29

Well, that goes back to you know, taking on something else. An emotion, right. So it's not up to you to make them comfortable, right.

Dana Saperstein 56:36

I can't there's nothing I can say I can't you know, I used to lie to people. When they asked me what I did for a living. I'd say I was an artist and they say, Well, what's your medium? And I'd say words and they look at me like, I don't have another you and you're a wordsmith Exactly.

Kim Fauskee 56:50

Well, if anybody's interested in learning more about the highly sensitive person in the empathic person, I highly recommend Elaine Aaron's book, The highly sensitive person, because not only did it augment what my psychologist had told me, but it contains some other information that was extremely helpful for me and I've given it out over the years numerous times to, to either people that read it and say, No, I thought it was app, but I'm not really that or my God. You thought the book was written about you. It was written about me. Alright, thanks. So I think it's really helpful. So Dana, thanks because I think it was an important topic.

Fear Me Out 57:33

We appreciate our listeners and are interested in your comments and suggestions. Feel free to email us at your mail podcast@gmail.com If you're interested in becoming a sponsor for this podcast, please email us at your mail podcast@gmail.com Thank you for listening. See you next time.